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## **The impact of NGOs on local governance in urban and rural areas of Lithuania**

### **Introduction**

Modern democratic polity is grounded on citizens' participation in public decision-making process. Citizens' participation is a key indicator of democratic performance. Active participation in the process of democratic decision-making gives information about citizens' interests, needs and preferences. Pateman (1970, p.105) indicates that "we do learn to participate by participating and feelings of political efficiency are more likely to be developed in a participatory environment". Participation in political life develops civic competence and responsibility. Citizens' participation quality and quantity has an important role in the representation of citizens' preferences and social learning effect.

Most scholars agree that civil society in post-communist countries reveals similar characteristics that simultaneously distinguish it from civil society in other countries. Putnam (1993, p.39) is concerned with the lack of social capital in post-communist countries and invites their citizens to be patient in "reconstructing those shards of indigenous civic associations that have survived decades of totalitarian rule". Civil society in post-communist countries is characterized by low levels of organizational membership, low levels of social capital and ambiguous boundary relationships between the third sector, the state and free market (Degutis, 1995, Howard, 2003, Matonytė, 2004; Ramonaitė, 2005, Žaliukaitė, 2005).

The democratic ideal refers to equal consideration and representation of the needs and preferences of all citizens, but the reality of citizens' participation in Lithuania is different. Because of the low levels of human capital and social capital, rural people are not equally represented in political life and market economy (Imbrasaitė, 2006).

The focus of this study is the impact of NGOs on local governance in urban and rural areas of Lithuania. The method of the study is analysis of scientific literature, secondary data analysis and an in-depth interview.

### **The impact of NGOs on local governance**

Fung (2003) indicates that associations contribute to democracy in particular ways, because of their citizen socialization, the public sphere, resistance and checking power, and interest representation effect. Organizations may contribute to forming and enhancing attitudes,

knowledge and behaviors of individuals in ways that benefit democracy. Participating in associations, individuals develop cognitive and deliberative skills, civic virtues, and a sense of efficacy (Putnam, 1993; Verba, Brady & Scholzman, 1995; Badescu, 2003).

Associations provide the social infrastructure for public deliberation and a setting for an agenda. They must have the capacity to project their voice in order to keep the public sphere vital.

Finally, associations can have institutional effects when they interact with the state structures. Associations aggregate individual needs and preferences and offer additional channels to transmit them to the government. Associations can improve the quality of representation; they transmit the needs and preferences of their members to government, and are able to mitigate representational inequalities.

The impact of citizen participation in local governance are shaped by legal frameworks, the structures and conventions of local government, organizational capacities of NGOs, traditions and conventions of political life. A term „local governance“ refers to the design and functioning of elected local authorities, non-elected bodies and formal and informal institutional arrangements that link different bodies involved in local decision-making and service delivery processes.

Institutional arrangements within local authorities and other local agencies play an important role in determining the impact of NGOs on local governance. Local institutions have an important role in „framing“ activities of NGOs (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001). „Institutions are not simply administrative and political organizations; they are the sets of routines, norms and incentives that shape and constrain individuals‘ preferences and behaviour“ (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001). Institutional rules may be consciously designed and clearly specified or take the form of unwritten customs and conventions. Institutions may change as a result of strategic action and/or evolve as a response to a changing external environment.

Lowndes and Wilson (2001, p.634) argue that “the institutional arrangements of local governance may.... make it more attractive for groups to engage in one sort of activity rather than another (for example service-level agreements or contracts may squeeze out campaigning or self-help); reward groups with particular internal structures whilst sidelining those organized in a different way; influence overall levels of voluntary sector activity (through grant levels and other forms of support); determine access to other funding and information-based networks (for example, at the central government or European level)” . Institutional arrangements of local governance may give priority to collective forms of citizen participation over individual ones. Foley and Edwards (1996, p.49) indicate that civic associations activities are shaped by “the relations that associations of all sorts might forge with the state”.

“Voluntary associations may receive financial support from local agencies, but institutional arrangements do not necessarily exist to allow them access to policy-making” (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001, p.637). Organizations may find their influence limited, if local decision-makers do not take into account their preferences and needs. “The biggest deterrent to participation among citizens is their perception – or experience – of a lack ...of response to consultation “ (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001, p.638). Levi (1996, p.49) argues that citizens capacity “to make effective demands and sanction government may remain limited”, because agenda setting and media manipulation mean that certain issues may be repressed and ignored.

The impact of NGOs on local governance also depends on organizational capacities of NGOs. Fredericksen & London (2000, p.233) argue that “internal organizational capacity comes from various elements of an organization, providing the basis upon which organizations can implement programs and achieve goals” and indicate four elements of organizational capacity: leadership and vision, management and planning, fiscal planning and practice, and operational support. “Leadership and vision includes the presence of a cohesive board of directors as well as evidence of community participation and support for that leadership. Organizational

direction via a vision/mision statement that has been articulated by the directing board contributes to coordinated action” ( Fredericksen & London, 2000, p.234).

“The level of support and commitment to planning by their leadership of the organization is also a crucial element in an assessment of organizational capacity. If management neither plans nor possesses the support systems needed to enable planning (e.g. budgeting systems, planning models, information about past organizational experiences), then the issue of capacity is largely moot. Organizational survival generally requires planning and the development of a shared vision and goals, as well as as accurate assessment and effective management of existing and potential human and fiscal resources” ( Fredericksen & London, 2000, p.235).

Fredericksen & London (2000, p.235) argue that “the most well-organized group is limited without adequate and predictable financial resources to support operations. Fiscal planning and practice capacity centers upon the presence of a formal fiscal system, including fundrising and financial tracking and reporting mechanism. Adherence to generally accepted fiscal practice provides necessary (though not sufficient) evidence of accountability in the expenditure of public funds as well as necessary data for planning” ( Fredericksen & London, 2000, p.235).

Organizational structure and staff also has impact on organizational capacity. “Staffing levels suggest basic operational capacity, the ratio of staff to volunteers, compensation packaging, and the level of staff participation in decision-making. The size of the organization in terms of staffing levels versus volunteer levels is important for sustained organizational learning and consistency of operations, as is the ability of organization to attract and maintain qualified staff and voluteers. Although staff of volunteer ratios are not definite, organizations with a core of experienced staff members demonstrate and institutional memory, which leverages service capacity” ( Fredericksen & London, 2000, p.235).

## **Methodology**

The method of the study is an in-depth interview. 40 in-depth interviews with NGOs members and 20 in-depth interviews with local decision-makers were conducted in 3 towns with population over 400 000 residents and 5 villages with the population of less than 2000 residents. 3 selected towns and 5 selected villages represent 5 regions of Lithuania. Although more detailed research and analysis still needs to be extended to more towns and villages in Lithuania, particularly to those located in the rest of 5 regions of Lithuania, I argue that the same causal processes apply, in varying ways and to varying degrees, to the rest of the region as well. Additionally, 8 interviews were conducted with experts in 2 selected towns.

## **Cooperation between NGOs and local government**

Law on Local Government of Lithuania (art.4) prescribes the main principles of local government: “responsibility for voters”, “participation of residents in public affairs of municipality”, “co-ordination of interests of comunity and individual residents of municipality”, “publicity and responsiveness to opinion of residents”.

Law on Public Administration of Lithuania indicates:

“institutions of public administration *have to consult* organizations, which represent a public interest in a particular sector, and *local people*, in case it is not prescribed by a law. A public administration institution may choose the form of consultation (a meeting of interested people, a survey, an invitation of representatives and other methods of inquiry of opinions), in case a law does not prescribe differently” (art.7)

The article does not indicate, which form of consultation has to be chosen and does not indicate who is a representative of an organization. Law on Local Government of Lithuania prescribes:

Committees of the Local Council are established for preliminary analysis of questions, which are going to be held out in the Council and to propose conclusions and suggestions... *Representatives of society*, experts... may participate in work of committees and commissions according to the order, which is set by the Local Council and they have a deliberative vote” (art.15)

The Local Council does not have a duty to invite “representatives of society” (including representatives of NGOs) to a discussion. According to the Law on Local Government, there is no strict requirement to have representatives of NGOs in committees and working groups of the Local Council.

Interviews with officials of local government reveal a negligent attitude to activities of local committees and commissions. Local officials pay little attention to participation of “representatives of society” in local government, unless it is prescribed by law.

According to Law on Local Government, the Local Council should set rules how committees and commissions have to be formed, but usually committees and commissions are formed accidentally. Empirical data present that only the Council of Youth Affairs and the Council of Health works by every local government, because their establishment are prescribed by Law on Youth Policy and Law on Protection of Health (NOIC, 2006).

The lack of clear national and local legal norms on participation of NGOs in local government causes a different situation in different regions of Lithuania. Local government officials do not make efforts to invite representatives of NGOs to participate in activities of commissions and councils, unless law prescribes it (NOIC, 2006).

The mechanisms of cooperation with NGOs are quite different in different municipalities. Development of relationships with third sector depends on such factors as an attitude of the Council or the mayor regarding cooperation with NGOs, capabilities of local officials to cooperate with NGOs, a number of NGOs in municipality, and organizational capacities of NGOs. The responsibility to enhance cooperation of local government and NGOs is usually ascribed to a vice-mayor, a coordinator of youth affairs, or any specialist, who works at a department of social affairs, of culture, of sport, of education, of health and etc. A local official in rural areas sometimes is responsible only for development of cooperation of local government with neighborhood communities, and he/she is not responsible for the development of relationships with other NGOs in a region.

According to the Law on Local Government, a neighborhood is a administrative unit of the local government and the head of a neighborhood has to cooperate with local community in order to fulfill his/her duties ( to gather comments of representatives of neighborhood on local issues, to organize meetings of local officials and residents of a neighborhood and etc.). Law on Local Government prescribes:

Residents of a local community or a few local communities may elect a representative of their community. A representative of a local community is elected according to the rules, which are prescribed by the Local Council (art.32).

A representative of a local community ... represents interests of a local community in a neighborhood, institutions of local government and government institutions, which are established in a local region (art.33).

At the moment, the legal regulation of election of a representative of a local community is improper and does not make sense, because a mayor is elected by the Local Council.

Members of NGOs indicate that cooperation with local government may be developed by the help of umbrella organizations, which include all organizations, which work in a particular field. Umbrella organizations eliminate domination of NGOs with strong organizational capacities and decrease the role of incompetent and weak organizations in decision making processes. Representation of NGOs in local decision making should be improved by association of NGOs and representation their interests through umbrella organizations.

## **The impact of the Soviet legacy and free market on participation in NGOs in rural and urban areas**

Leaders and members of NGOs in rural areas indicated that in Soviet times rural communities had been more integrated, because of common work in a collective farm and other work related activities.

Work connected people. All settlement was like a factory or similar ... there were a lot of holidays in a collective farm at that time...first tractor went to the fields, first corn was thrown into the fields, a haymaking holiday, harvest holidays... Concerts and parties were organized and about two hundred people participated there. (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 2)

The State was responsible for leisure activities in the Soviet times. State officials financed and organized concerts, holidays, and parties and supported activities of cultural clubs.

...to tell the truth, there were more activities available at that time, than now... well, there were a lot of common meetings organized.... Well, there were cultural clubs for young and adult people in every collective farm, cultural houses were built and musical instruments were bought. Possibilities of socializing [in the Soviet times] were much better, than now.... (Member of "Sauliai" in a rural area)

The State interference in almost all spheres of people's life created certain atmosphere of security and predictability.

...my life was perfect, everything was ensured ... that you would get a salary, you would get a pension, you would have holidays..... a salary for holidays, a medical treatment was ensured for us. Bribes were not spread so much before... only for the doctor for an operation. There were sanatoriums, holiday houses everywhere. The head of a trade union ran and offered for everybody to go to Birštonas or to Druskininkai free of charge ... (Leader of a local community organization in rural area 6)

People enjoyed material guaranties and material security in the Soviet times. Most interviewees indicated that rural people's economic situation was better in the Soviet times, than now.

You see now there are more depressions, more suicides... because future is really not unsure ... (Leader of a local community organization in an urban area 1)

...well, there is no [COMMUNIST] Party, no single truth ... and, I say, there is no terror against people now. ... material well-being?... the Lithuanians' economic situation was not bad then [in the Soviet time]... material well - being decreased, and moral well- being increased in comparison with the Soviet time...(Leader of a local community organization a rural area 4)

Interviewees in rural areas indicated that market economy increased individual work in his or her own farm and it decreased relations with other members of local community.

...there is alienation ...Now all have their own groups separately.... And now ... if you are a member of a political party, you have a group, if you a member of a folk group, you have the second group, if you a member of a neighborhood community, you have the third group and neighbors – there are four groups in which you are participating. (Leader of a local community organization a rural area 6)

The total control of the State and people's inability to have a real impact on their lives in the Soviet time caused indifference to community affairs and low sense of personal efficiency. People were used to somebody taking responsibility for their problems and caring for them.

People's understanding that somebody has to care for them, and, especially the State, comes from the Soviet system. (Leader of rural women's organization 1)

...our society is entirely post-soviet so far, we are brought up so [that] the Government is the Government and it is impossible to change it and there is no use to do it... (Member of Sauliai in a rural area)

People are still rather indifferent. If there is a problem really related to them, lack of something, they start raising it up, but, in general, they are not interested in anything. (Leader of women's organization in a rural area 1)

### **Types and paths of development of NGOs in rural and urban areas of Lithuania**

According to their aims and activities, NGOs in rural areas may be divided into two types: leisure organizations (cultural clubs, hobby associations, women's organizations, widows' clubs, religious groups), which have primary social function and interests organizations (local community organizations, farmers organizations), which aim to defend needs of a narrowly defined constituency.

NGOs in urban areas are characterized by a wide diversity of aims and activities. Urban NGOs may be divided into three types: leisure (cultural clubs, sport clubs, hobby associations), interest (local community organizations, professional organizations, trade unions, school boards, social organizations) and activist organizations (environmental, human rights, peace organizations).

Activities of most rural NGOs were started by one or a few active persons who mostly were employed in the local government, cultural centers, schools, or religious communities.

There is an active person in our community, who shows concern for everything. She can not keep still for even a minute, she is concerned with everything... everything touches her ....so we started... (Leader of a local community organization 1)

A woman, who participated in the activities of a club "Mano namai" [„My house“] in a town, suggested ...well, it was her initiative...but it is possible to say, if nobody had wished, nothing would have been done. ( Leader of a women's organization 1)

Most urban NGOs were initiated by a few active persons, who had concrete ideas concerning aims and activities of their organization and often were supported by local government, national (Lithuanian trade union) or international organizations (United Nations, Caritas, Montessori, Rotary).

Our organization was established by... a group of women, who had divorced. (Member of Woman's help for women in an urban area)

The woman, who became a member of the Seimas, established the Centre before twelve years. She was the first director of the Centre and I was the second person who was employed by her. The Centre was the result of the partnership between the Kaunas municipality and the United Nations development program for Eastern and Central Europe. (Leader of Woman's employment and information centre in an urban area)

Most leaders of NGOs indicated that their organization was registered officially in order to get financial support from the local government or different national and foreign funds. Even if an

organization or association was registered officially in order to get a financial support, most rural people indicated that they participated in NGOs because of a need for socializing or self-realization.

She rests for about four or five hours at night in summer and it makes no difference. She participates in local community activities and even participates actively. A person needs something, because work... farmer's work... it is complicated... it is difficult for a person... a need to socialize with others in order not to run down... (Leader of a local community organization 2)

Local community organizations in rural areas mostly were created “from above” by officials of the local government. Some local community organizations have been led by the head of the neighborhood, but others - by well-known and respected persons of a local community.

I communicate with people in the local community because of my job [note: he is a veterinary surgeon in a neighborhood]. There are a few persons who I do not know – those who have moved there recently. (Leader of a local community organization 5)

Interest organizations in urban areas were mostly created “from below” by a group of active persons.

The centre of the local community was established in a library, where I worked. I had some supporters in our library. The leader of another local community centre induced me to do it. (Leader of a local community organization in an urban area 2)

The leaders and members of interest organizations in rural and urban areas indicated that officially declared aims have not been fully implemented in real activities of their organization. They emphasized that the main aim of their organizations was to identify local problems and to mobilize local people to solve them.

...the goals and the tasks of the local community organization are to organize people of the village, consolidate them, and to incorporate them into collaborative activities. (Leader of a local community organization 2)

The activities of interest organizations in rural areas have been mostly oriented towards a general aim to improve conditions of life of a local community:

...our activities are small, but when one follows another, that's OK.... The light is going to be in the streets soon ... Have you seen the lamps? We hanged them. We wrote an official letter concerning the path to the local institution ... (Leader of a local community organization 6)

Look, we made a bus route longer. We are going to build a new bus stop here as well. The community did it. You know it is not necessary to think that the community starts pulling mountains down, because people are employed and they are short of time. (Leader of a local community organization 4)

Leisure organizations in urban and rural areas have been established from “below” and mostly have been oriented to leisure activities and sharing of information related to hobbies:

We did not have serious aims. Our organization was really devoted to women's partial spare-time activities... we had small aims when we established our organization. ...we sought to solve our leisure time problems... It was what we could not get in families, somewhere else... something what would be only for women - to express ourselves. (Leader of women's organization 1)

....a need ... I do not know how to talk about it. It was an internal need to get and to give what you can not have got in your own house. You can not have got it from your friends, it was a wish of a broader life... It was not a need of independence, but we simply wished to participate somewhere, to do something that we can not have done alone or with our families. (Leader of a women's organization 1)

## **Organizational capacities of NGOs in urban and rural areas**

All members indicated that activities of their organizations are coordinated by a directing board, but a few provided concrete evidence of community support. Members of boards in rural areas are residents of a particular neighborhood.

....there are about seven or eight persons who are active and work in the Board of the local community. (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 2)

25 persons registered at the beginning....there are supporters.... but perhaps about ten persons are most active and wish to participate in activities... (Leader of a rural women's organization 2)

Directing boards usually allowed participation of members or residents in the selection of board membership, but often directing boards were elected with little input of community, because a few people participated in an election.

Some local community organizations in rural areas are leaded by the head of a neighborhood, but others - by well-known and respected persons of a local community.

The head of the neighbourhood is subordinated to the municipality's director of administration... The local community organization consists of independent people... (Leader of a rural local community organization 4)

I communicate with people in the local community because of my job [note: he is a veterinary surgeon in a neighborhood]. There a few persons who I do not know – those who have moved there recently. (Leader of a rural local community organization 5)

The efforts of a local community organization to associate with local people and to consolidate them are often rather successful, especially in rural areas.

...on state holidays some people came from the church....Well, on Midsummer Day we organized a party... If a party was ....and there was some financing ... – then it was possible to expect that more local people would participate ... (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 6)

Only more educated and more active people participate in local community affairs in rural areas.

Educated people are more interested in activities of local community organization. I think those people who are less educated are afraid of something. They think, "well, noblemen do it for themselves".... when we were building a funeral hall, women from a religious community was always saying "You are doing that....you are doing that for yourselves". (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 3)

Educated women ... who have less children participate more actively in our organization. I think, they have less work at home... (Leader of rural women's organization 1)

Well, there are people, of course, not many...who go to the local community organization and work there on free time. (Member of "Sauliai" in a rural area).



The same group of active and more educated persons usually work in all NGOs of a rural local community.

I am a member of all organizations in our local community. Well, yes, a group [of active people] is divided into a few small [groups or organizations]... (Leader of a rural women's organization 2)

.... eleven persons are in the community Council, five persons come to the meetings... a local community organization is like that... I am a member of Sauliai organization as well... (Member of a local community organization in a rural area 3)

Members of urban NGOs as a major problem identified the passivity of members of their organization.

...maybe the main problem of the organizations is our members' passivity. Well, the passivity of people in general. (Member of minor businessmen organization in an urban area 2)

Most leaders and members of NGOs have concrete ideas concerning activities of their organization in the future, but they recognize they simply do not have time and it is not easy to predict developments in the transitional society. The level of strategic planning in rural NGOs is lower than in urban NGOs considering the proportion of urban NGOs with articulated mission statements, strategic plans, and plans for funding.

NGOs in rural areas are dependent upon volunteers' work, they do not have paid staff at all. There may be a member or sometimes a few members employed in urban NGOs. Interviewees indicated frequent ad hoc organizational action with little planning, no systematic record retention and low institutional memory. Many volunteers and members of NGOs indicated that they have limited exposure to computers.

### **The impact of NGOs on local governance in urban and rural areas of Lithuania**

Leaders of local communities in rural and urban areas indicated that the establishment of a formal organization helped them to make pressure on the local government.

... we are not a private person already ... We can talk, for example, to the mayor, they look at us in a different way. If it were an entirely informal group, it would seem as a group gathered and made ruffles .... We have some power already ... we are organized to a certain extent. This is an organized group, not just any group. (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 8)

Local community organizations in urban and rural areas aggregate and transmit local people's claims to the local government. Local community organizations in rural areas often are the only channel, which transmits local people's needs and preferences to local government.

The local community organization has an influence on work of the local government... Look at our last meeting....if there were no a local community organization, those high chiefs, starting with the mayor, the chief of roads, the chief of a bus park ...would have not appeared. If the local community organization had not made claims about the improvement of roads, especially about cleaning them in winter, on lighting, on protection from assaults last winter... they would not have done anything. (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 6)

Practically, the head of the neighborhood participates in our meetings; he is a representative of the local government. We cooperate with the local government. ... whether it is cooperation,

we “torture” him, we really press him ... delicately and nicely, but we press him (Leader of a local community organization in a urban area 4)

Local community organizations in rural and urban areas are not always able to influence local officials, because of the indifference of local people.

....why a leader of the local community organization is responsible for serving everybody, when there is an institution, the neighborhood paid by the state which has to do their work. (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 7)

On the other side, even leader of NGOs in rural and urban areas think they are able to solve their problems with the help of local government.

....our organization is able to do very little in terms of material things. It can only raise a question and try to solve it with somebody's help. ...with the help of others. ... we are not capable of doing anything without the help of the local government. (Leader of a rural women's organization 1)

Some NGOs in rural and urban areas provide the social infrastructure for public deliberation and a setting for an agenda.

We discuss political and social matters in our organization. Everything from a to z; from programs of political parties to their implementation. (Leader of a local community organization in a rural area 8)

We raise our problems that are most important for us and we raise them on higher level in order to all pay attention to them. (Leader of a local community organization in an urban area 2)

Associations with private or nonpolitical purposes contribute to the public sphere less.

We decided not to poke our noses in politics. But social questions are on agenda naturally. We wish to help people who have been overtaken by misfortune. It is not serious work, perhaps, but simply to help, when you have some time. (Leader of a rural women's organization 3)

Participation in NGOs has effects on individuals such as providing them with information, imbuing civic skills, developing their civic virtues, teaching them to be critical, increasing their sense of self – efficiency, and it increases organizational capacity as well.

I have learnt a lot in Šauliai activities ... I found out a lot about Lithuanian history, which was hidden, and my point of view has become broader... (Member of “Sauliai“ in a rural area)

It has changed my attitude towards social life... when you sit at home and do not see anything except TV and violence...you can not really understand how people live. As far as you do not visit and do not see....then you come down and see everything differently. (Leader of a rural women's organization 2)

What do I get by participating in the local community organization? .... You do not always work for a payment. Do you agree? The moral is such... We have done it or we are able to do it .... it is a pleasure. (Leader of a local community organization in an urban area 6)

## Conclusions

The lack of clear national and local legal norms on participation of NGOs in decision making processes at local level causes a different situation in different regions of Lithuania. Local goverment officials do not make efforts to invite representatives of NGOs to participate in

activities of commissions and councils, unless law prescribes it. Representation of NGOs in local decision making should be improved by clear definition of mechanisms and means of cooperation between NGOs and local government in the *Law on Local Government*, local councils have to pass rules concerning participation of representatives of NGOs in commissions and committees of the Local Council, and representatives of NGOs in the Local Council have to be delegated by umbrella organizations, they have to be known and accountable for other organizations working in the same field. Additionally, local government has to prepare the Programme for development of cooperation with NGOs.

The total control of the State and people's inability to have a real impact on their lives in the Soviet time caused their indifference to community affairs and low sense of personal efficiency. Most rural residents and a part of urban residents are used to somebody taking responsibility for their problems and caring for them. Market reform and dissolving of collective farms in rural areas decreased social interactions and fostered alienation.

According to their aims and activities, NGOs in rural areas may be divided into two types: leisure organizations (cultural clubs, hobby associations, women's organizations, widows' clubs, religious groups), which have primary social function and interests organizations (local community organizations, farmers organizations), which aim to defend needs of a narrowly defined constituency. NGOs in urban areas are characterized by a wide diversity of aims and activities. Urban NGOs may be divided into three types: leisure (cultural clubs, sport clubs, hobby associations), interest (local community organizations, professional organizations, trade unions, school boards, social organizations) and activist organizations (environmental, human rights, peace organizations). Urban NGOs are characterized by a wider diversity of aims and activities, than rural ones. NGOs in rural areas are oriented towards private or nonpolitical purposes such as leisure activities with the exception of interest organizations, which are oriented towards the improvement of living conditions in a local community. Urban NGOs are oriented towards private and public purposes, more universal goals, solving local and national social problems.

NGOs in rural areas mostly have been established by one or a few active persons, who have worked in the local government, cultural centers, schools, or religious communities. Local community organizations in rural areas were mostly created "from above" by local government officials, while others such as leisure organizations were mostly established "from below". There is a positive side of establishment of a local community organization "from above" in rural areas, because local government supports development of an organization and it often increases organizational capacities of NGOs. Most urban local community organizations were established "from below" in order to represent the interests of their members or to spend leisure. The same group of active and educated persons is at the core of all NGOs in a local community. Urban NGOs are characterized by wider distribution of power within an organization and local community than rural ones.

Most leaders and members of NGOs have concrete ideas concerning activities of their organization in the future, but they recognize they simply do not have time and developments in the transitional society are . The level of strategic planning in rural NGOs is lower than in urban NGOs considering the proportion of urban NGOs with articulated mission statements, strategic plans, and plans for funding.

NGOs in rural areas are entirely dependent upon volunteers' work, they usually do not have any paid staff. Some urban NGOs, which have been supported by international organizations and have been characterized by well-developed relations with local municipalities and state agencies, have a few employees. Interviewees indicated frequent ad hoc organizational action with little planning, no systematic record retention and low institutional memory in urban and rural areas.

The impact of NGOs on local governance is rather weak in urban and rural areas of Lithuania, because of uninstitutionalized relationship between the local government and citizen organizations, low organizational capacities of NGOs, and the lack of citizen participation. The extent of the impact of rural NGOs in local governance is weaker, than urban ones.

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